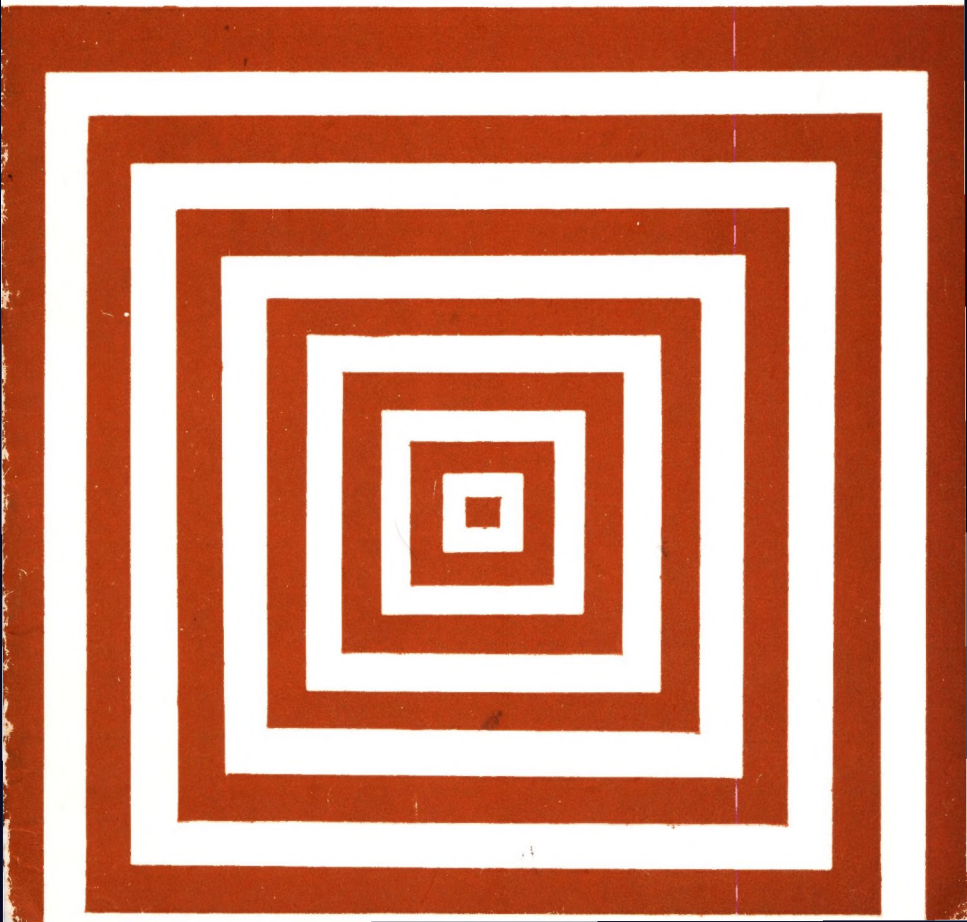
M. Rosental

DIALECTICS OF THE PRESENT EPOCH



M. ROZENTAL

Dialectics of the Present Epoch

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In modern time social development is proceeding faster than ever before in history.

The world socialist system, now the decisive factor in contemporary history, is steadily growing and advancing.

World capitalism, rent by deep-rooted and acute contradictions, is in the throes of a general crisis. National-liberation revolutions are destroying the colonial system. The newly independent states have come to play an ever increasing role in world affairs. The peoples that have thrown off colonial yoke now have a real possibility of ridding themselves of the evils and anguish of the capitalist path of development.

Even capitalist ideologists describe the contemporary situation as "a revolutionary storm." There is no point in arguing about how to put it. It is a fact that waves of the revolutionary storm have already broken on the shores of the Western hemisphere, where the Cuban people overthrew the detested pro-American regime and raised aloft the banner of socialism.

The world today is in a state of revolutionary ferment.

What roads is social development following today? What are the main and decisive factors in the present era?

The development of each historic epoch is complex, many-sided and contradictory, especially of the present one. By simply collecting and studying facts you will not be able to understand the peculiarities of the contemporary era or throw light on all its complexities. **You have to find the inner relationship between events and facts, put them in order, establish the system they follow, and lay bare their trends.** That is the main and most difficult problem. And it is here that Marxist dialectics comes to your aid.

Dialectics is a body of propositions concerning laws of development that are applicable to all spheres of nature, human society and human

thinking and, consequently, it enables you to choose the only correct viewpoint of reality. But that is not the only reason why Lenin regarded it as the decisive feature of Marxism. The power and tremendous importance of dialectics lie in that it allows you to find a new approach to reality each time, in this way avoiding stereotyped thinking. In other words, dialectics derives its power from the fact that it permits human thought to be just as versatile and flexible as reality itself, as the objective nature of things. Lenin had good reason for calling Marxist dialectics a teaching with myriad shades of approach and approximation to reality.

Today Marxists are confronted by the task of using the tool of dialectics and Marxist methodology in order to understand the problems of the contemporary epoch.

METHODOLOGICAL PREMISES

The policy and practical activity of a Communist Party and of the people it leads, the strategy and tactics of its revolutionary struggle, depend on the way the Party understands and defines the essence of the contemporary era.

In doing that, the Marxist dialectical proposition of a historical approach to any analysis of reality must be put in the forefront.

The Marxist method, said Lenin, takes into account the objective content of any given historical period, finds, so to say, the historical landmarks which determine the place and role of an epoch in the general advance of human society. Hence, in order to define the essence of the present epoch we mush first of all **establish the specific ways** in which it differs from other epochs and find the main feature that distinguishes it from them.

The dialectical method is a theory of development. It demands that everything be examined in the process of its development and change.

Only such approach will enable one to see every object and every phenomenon as it really is, and not as an arbitrary construction of the human mind. That is particularly important when it is a matter of getting at the essence of a historical epoch. A new epoch arises as a result of the development of the preceding one, and it can be understood only if studied as a result of that development. But although it arose out of the previous epoch all its characteristics and specific features are of a new quality, differing fundamentally from those of the epochs that went before it.

Hence, the importance of the historical approach, which makes it possible to avoid confusing a new stage in mankind's progress with previous stages.

The second methodological premise making for a correct scientific approach in determining the essence of our epoch is a combination of two forms of theoretical examination of the problem, namely, **analysis and synthesis.**

Every phenomenon, even the very simplest, has many aspects and is at the same time a definite entity. The function of analysis is to provide an understanding of these different aspects, of the different processes and movements. Marxist analysis, however, is not a mere division of a whole into its parts. In breaking down a complex whole into separate units, Marxist analysis singles out **the aspect or side that constitutes the basis of the phenomenon, of the entity, the essence of the object.**

After we have broken down a complex phenomenon into its component parts and singled out the most important one, the one that characterizes the essence of the phenomenon, we must re-build the phenomenon as a whole, this time as a whole the understanding of which is based on its most essential feature.

Synthesis therefore consists not merely in uniting the parts into a whole but in doing this in such a way that **the whole is illuminated by the main and essential feature of the phenomenon revealed through the analysis.**

ESSENCE OF THE CONTEMPORARY EPOCH

Life is in a state of constant development. The past turns into the present, and the present into the future. Any movement therefore, as Lenin said, contains, in addition to the present, bits of the past and bits of the future.

That proposition of Marxism-Leninism fully applies to the concept of an epoch. "An era," said Lenin, "is called an era precisely because it encompasses the sum total of variegated phenomena and wars, typical and untypical, big and small, some peculiar to advanced countries, others to backward countries. To brush aside these concrete questions by resorting to general phrases about the 'era'... is to abuse the very concept 'era.'" *(Coll Works,* Vol. 23, pp. 36-37.)

The modern epoch, too, is a sum total of widely different phenomena and processes. The Soviet Union is building a communist society. The People's Democracies are engaged in socialist construction. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries a struggle is under way to throw off the foreign yoke and go over to capitalism or, bypassing capitalism, to socialism.

The powerful peace movement, in which diverse social forces are united, is growing broader. In the capitalist countries a battle is going on between labour and capital, between the working class and the bourgeoisie. The sum total of all these processes and phenomena is what constitutes the present epoch.

If a single element or feature of any importance is omitted, the result will be a crude and oversimplified picture of the epoch. On the other hand, in order to understand the basic historical colouring of the epoch **it is necessary to single out the main, determining feature, in the light of which all the others become clearer.** This is where the historical approach on which Marxist dialectics insists is invaluable.

There arises the following question. Does there exist, independently of human wishes, an objective criterion for regarding one approach as correct and another as incorrect, for saying that such-and-such an

approach is a Marxist approach and such-and-such is non-Marxist? Yes, such a criterion does exist. Is it as scientific as the criteria in chemistry, biology, physics and the other exact sciences? Yes, it is.

One epoch differs from another in that a different class stands at the head of social development, a different social force determines the main trend and direction of social movement. That is the most exact criterion, and therefore the only scientific one.

As far as the contemporary epoch is concerned its historical content is determined by the fact that the working class heads the social progress. The essence of the present epoch is expressed in the struggle of the working class to transform society along socialist lines. The capitalist method of production has carried out its historical mission by preparing the objective and subjective conditions for mankind's transition to higher social forms, to socialism and communism. Only the working class, in an alliance with the mass of the working people, is capable of carrying out that transition.

Thus, from the great variety of aspects, sides and processes of the contemporary epoch we single out the movement that expresses its essence. **This movement is the battle for socialism,** for the socialist transformation of society. And that is the reason why the Programme of the CPSU and documents of the international communist movement speak of the contemporary epoch as an epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism.

Once we have established the main content of the present epoch we can reconstruct it as an entity, instead of simply as the mechanical sum of the various phenomena. Marxist synthesis has nothing in common with simple arithmetical grouping together. Some theoreticians say that if they add together the national-liberation movement, the peace movement and the movement for socialism and communism the result will be a picture of the epoch. That is not a Marxist approach but a vulgarized, mechanical approach. **Marxist synthesis is not a simple arithmetical combination of various aspects of a phenomenon into a whole but a combination that is based on the main aspect.**

Important though such social processes as the present-day national-

liberation movement or the fight for peace may be, they are closely connected with, and dependent on, the main process of the present epoch, and that is the socialist transformation of society. **The downfall of colonialism and the struggle to prevent another world war became a real possibility only thanks to the existence of the world socialist system,** which has undermined the foundations of imperialism and weakened its forces. The collapse of colonialism is therefore not an alien phenomenon in the epoch of the transition of human society from capitalism to socialism, but an inseparable aspect and feature of it, a process brought into being by the general and main phenomenon of the collapse of capitalism. And that is why Lenin, in his day, taught Marxists to realize the fact that a socialist revolution was inconceivable without national wars and revolutions.

Therefore, no matter how mosaic-like an epoch, including the present one, may be, it has to be understood as a specific entity although, of course, an extremely complex and contradictory entity. And that is how the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union describes the present epoch: "Our epoch, whose main content is the transition from capitalism to socialism, is an epoch of struggle between the two opposing social systems, an epoch of socialist and national-liberation revolutions, of the breakdown of imperialism and the abolition of the colonial system, an epoch of the transition of more and more peoples to the socialist path, of the triumph of socialism and communism on a world-wide scale."

The above definition is dialectical, first and foremost, because it encompasses many different social phenomena and movements, yet at the same time it presents this diversity as an entity by singling out the "main content" of the epoch.

The definition starts off by pointing out the main feature of the contemporary epoch, namely, the transition from capitalism to socialism, the breakdown of imperialism and the rise of the socialist system. The landmarks of the epoch are listed with strict scientific accuracy. It is impossible to confuse it with any other epoch, for it is only in this epoch that the downfall of capitalism and the rise of

socialism are taking place. It is quite logical that such processes as national-liberation revolutions, the breakdown of colonialism and the struggle of the working people for democratic liberties and peace are also taking place in our time, for the existence of socialism weakens imperialism all along the line and gives greater impetus to the movements directed against imperialism.

CONTRADICTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRESENT EPOCH

What are the motive forces in the contemporary epoch? **What is the central factor in the struggle between the opposing social forces** and trends that determine the epoch's meaning? Proceeding from the dialectics, it is not difficult to perceive that the contradictions of an epoch are the source of its development. Much more difficult is to give a Marxist analysis of concrete contradictions as such an analysis demands a most thorough study of the peculiarities of modern development.

This brings us to the very important question of the main and secondary contradictions. If an epoch is a sum total of different processes and movements, it stands to reason that the contradictions are different as well. An epoch is a complex web of different contradictions: main and secondary, more important and less important, though also significant.

The point is to single out the main, decisive, fundamental contradiction, the one that determines the development of our time. But that is not all. It is important to grasp the relationship and interaction between the main and secondary contradictions, to understand the complex dialectics of their interdependency. Contradictions are not isolated from one another. Movement is determined by the total action of all the main and secondary contradictions.

What are the contradictions in our time? There are many of them.

The contradictions between the world socialist system and the world capitalist system; the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the working class in the capitalist countries, between all working people and the capitalist monopolies; the contradictions between different countries and groups of countries inside the imperialist camp; the contradictions in relations between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, and between the peasantry and the working class; the contradictions between the national-liberation forces and imperialism, the contradictions within the national-liberation movement itself; and the tremendously important contradictions between the forces of war and the forces of peace.

Each of these contradictions expresses definite relations between classes and different social groups in modern society. In real life all these contradictions are interwoven, creating an extremely complex picture of reality.

It is absolutely clear that to ignore a single one of these contradictions is impermissible. The struggle to resolve them is the motive force of human society.

Which contradiction is the main one, however? There is no doubt that the only way to arrive at a correct answer is to start from the main trend of the epoch, namely, the breakdown of the capitalist mode of production and the rise of a new, socialist mode of production.

What are the main signs enabling us to single out the basic contradiction from the many others?

Firstly, **the main contradiction expresses the main trend of present-day development.** It is the main source of movement in our time, and the struggle to resolve it sets the course of historical development.

Secondly, **the fundamental contradiction is a permanent, stable one** that exists throughout the historical epoch.

The main contradiction of capitalism is the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private nature of appropriation. This contradiction is constant and stable throughout the existence of capitalism. The contradiction between the social nature of production

and the private nature of appropriation can be resolved only if the capitalist mode of production is done away with.

Finally, there is another sign pointing to the main contradiction, namely, that **this contradiction exerts a decisive influence on all the others—on their development, on the course of the struggle between them, and on their resolution.**

If we examine the present epoch from that point of view we see that the **fundamental contradiction is the one between the forces of socialism and the forces of capitalism,** between the two opposing world social systems.

This is the contradiction that expresses the main direction of development in the present epoch, the one of the breakdown of capitalism and the rise of the new, socialist mode of production. This is the contradiction that exists throughout the epoch. It is this contradiction that exerts the decisive influence on all the other contradictions of our time.

Can the contradiction between imperialism and the national-liberation movement be regarded as the fundamental contradiction of our time? No, it cannot, despite its importance and the tremendous role it plays in our time.

The point is that this contradiction does not determine the main direction of development. In their struggle to throw off foreign oppression, to achieve national self-determination, to free their countries from the survivals of feudal or even patriarchal relations, the national-liberation forces cover the same road—in a new, specific way, of course—that the industrial countries travelled long ago. The main content of the contemporary epoch, however, is the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The contradiction between the national-liberation movement and imperialism, which exists nowadays, is not a constant, stable contradiction characteristic of our epoch from beginning to end. The time is not far off when colonialism will be eradicated forever. That will not mark a new epoch in world development, however, for not all countries will have made the transition from capitalism to socialism.

Accordingly, that contradiction does not, and cannot, exert a decisive influence on the development and overcoming of all the other contradictions. Actually, it is the contradiction between the two world social systems, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat on a world-wide scale and in each capitalist country, that exerts the decisive influence on the development and surmounting of all the other contradictions. **It is likewise clear that when this fundamental contradiction is resolved, a new epoch, the epoch of world socialism and communism, will set in.**

INTERACTION BETWEEN THE FUNDAMENTAL AND SECONDARY CONTRADICTIONS

The sum total of the contradictions is a dialectical total, a connection between, and unity of, contradictions, and not an arithmetical total. Therefore, the dialectics of the relations between the contradictions, the connection between the main and secondary contradictions, is a question of paramount importance. Inability or unwillingness to single out the main contradiction, namely, the struggle between the two opposing world social systems, leads to a glossing over of the distinctions between the socialist and non-socialist movements, to a blurring of the main content of our epoch, an epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism.

Lenin noted that eclecticism, a fear of dialectical concreteness is characteristic of opportunism. The present-day opportunists merely enumerate the various contradictions of our epoch, lumping together with the others the one that determines and puts its stamp on the main direction of development. They talk about the contradictions between progress and regress in general, without analyzing the substance of progress and regress in the world of today. Yet only a concrete analysis of relations between the classes that constitute the forces of contemporary progress and contemporary reaction can bring out

the main contradiction of our time, the contradiction between socialism and capitalism.

If you fail to take into account the main contradiction of contemporary world history you will not be able correctly to analyze and understand such contradictions as, for example, those between imperialism and the dependent countries, or those between the forces of peace and the forces of war. Without the division of the world into the two opposing social systems it is impossible today to imagine the collapse of the colonial system and the development of the newly independent countries. **The existence of the world socialist system and the weakening of imperialism offer the peoples of the newly free countries the prospect of a national renascence, of ending age-long backwardness and poverty, and achieving economic independence.**

It is a fact that chiefly due to the existence of the world socialist system the contradiction between the forces of peace and the forces of war has not developed into another world war. The socialist system has become a natural centre of attraction for all the peaceloving forces on earth.

Nor is there any doubt that the struggle to resolve the contradictions between labour and capital, between the democratic elements and monopoly capital in the bourgeois countries is closely linked up with the development and solution of the main contradiction of modern society.

At the same time, materialist dialectics does not raise the main contradiction to the category of an absolute. It does not regard it separately from the other contradictions of the epoch, outside of its connections and interaction with them. Thus the struggle for peace, for democratic liberties does not bear an immediate socialist nature, but it undermines the forces of imperialism and thereby influences the development and resolution of the basic contradiction of our epoch. The battle for democracy is, therefore, a part of the battle for socialism, and all the anti-imperialist forces merge into a single torrent that is sapping and destroying world capitalism.

The development of all the contradictions of modern society will inevitably lead to the downfall of the outmoded capitalist system. There is no other historical prospect, nor can there be.

ON THE METHOD OF RESOLVING THE MAIN CONTRADICTION

A major feature of the present epoch is the possibility of resolving the contradiction between the two social systems peacefully, through peaceful co-existence and peaceful competition.

This is an objective and scientifically substantiated conclusion from the Marxist analysis of the specific features of the history of our era. It is in accord with the aspirations of all progressive mankind, which is fighting against war. We speak only about the forms of resolving the fundamental contradiction.

The contradiction between the capitalist and socialist systems is **an antagonistic contradiction,** that is, a contradiction between two absolutely different and hostile forces which cannot co-exist for all time. One of them represents the past, and the other, mankind's objective future.

This contradiction develops according to the laws of destruction of the old and triumph of the new. **That proposition, however, is too general. It has to be made more concrete,** in conformity with the specific feature of the present epoch. What is this specific feature, this qualitatively new element which allows us to speak of ways of resolving the basic contradiction of our historical epoch?

First and foremost, it is the new weapons, the new nature of war. We speak of this here not because we believe war to be the usual method of resolving this kind of contradiction. **No, Marxism has never considered war to be the only possible, let alone desirable, method of resolving antagonistic contradictions.**

With the new weapons that have been developed a war between the two systems, between the forces of socialism and the forces of imperialism, would be a catastrophe that would throw mankind far back. Marxists reject that path to socialism, to world communism.

What conclusion is to be drawn from the new conditions? How can and how should the main contradiction of our time be resolved? Peaceful co-existence, peaceful competition between the two opposing social systems is the logical and natural course of socialism's struggle against capitalism. Socialism will undoubtedly win, but without the countless sacrifices that would be inevitable in a nuclear war, without mankind being thrown back many centuries, without catastrophic consequences for the human race.

An important point is that Lenin put forward the policy of peaceful co-existence before there were nuclear weapons. In other words, this policy is not bound up only with the development of destructive means of warfare. The latter merely make peaceful co-existence more imperative.

As the internal conditions in each capitalist country ripen, and under the influence of the world socialist system, particularly its economic progress, **the world socialist revolution will proceed through the breaking away of separate countries from the imperialist system.**

It is a complex process, taking place in many stages, in which separate countries break away from the world imperialist system, the way Soviet Russia was the first to do and the way a number of Asian and East European countries did after the Second World War. Since it is a process of separate countries breaking away from the world capitalist system, it is natural that the capitalist and socialist systems should co-exist in the world for some period of time.

The policy of peaceful co-existence objectively follows from the fact that the development of the world socialist revolution is not a simultaneous process in our epoch.

That is an objective law. It does not, of course, exclude the tragic possibility of wars, because imperialism has not changed. That pos-

sibility exists, and the Marxists have no doubt that in case of war the world imperialism will be defeated. But under present-day conditions another real possibility has appeared, the possibility of peaceful coexistence, of peaceful competition, of the peaceful victory of socialism over capitalism. That is what we must work for.

DIALECTICS AND VIOLENCE

Both internal and external contradictions operate and interact in every process. **Marxist dialectics gives priority to the internal contradictions in this interaction, for these are the main and decisive ones.**

A classical example of this kind of interaction between external and internal contradictions in the process of social development is the October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917. Here we can see with striking clarity that the decisive contradictions, the ones that determined the course of development, were the internal contradictions in the country. The exacerbation and growth of these internal contradictions constituted the basic force of the process. The external contradictions for Russia in that period were the contradictions between the groups of imperialist countries, between different bourgeois countries. These external contradictions weakened the bourgeois camp and helped Russia's working class to resolve the internal contradictions and to make the socialist revolution.

What is the situation in the present era from that point of view? What is today's specific feature of the dialectics of internal and external contradictions?

Both internal and external contradictions undoubtedly operate in the present epoch, but the set-up today is different. The contradictions are much more complex than at the time of the Revolution of 1917. As a result of socialist revolutions in a number of countries the world today has split into two opposing social systems. In consequence of these revolutions the internal contradiction between labour and capital,

between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (and the entire mass of working people) has emerged into the international arena and has assumed the nature of a contradiction between the two social systems.

From the viewpoint of world development as a whole, the contradiction between the imperialist system and the socialist system is an internal one. But for each individual country this is an external contradiction. When viewed from different angles the same contradiction can be either internal or external.

The external contradictions are now obviously different from what they were in the period of the First World War, when the October Revolution took place. The conditions for the development of the socialist revolution in separate countries are now more favourable, since the external contradiction for each country is primarily the contradiction between the two social systems, socialism and capitalism. Naturally, this external contradiction promotes the ripening of internal contradictions in each country, intensifying the revolutionary processes.

Much though the picture of the present-day world has changed and grown more complex, however, the internal contradictions remain the main factor in its development. **It would therefore be a gross mistake to believe that the external contradictions by themselves, their resolution through a war between the socialist and capitalist countries, would automatically resolve the internal contradictions in separate countries.**

When Marxists say that the import of revolution is impossible this is not a crafty phrase intended to disguise revolutionary propaganda, as bourgeois ideologists claim. As a matter of fact, the import of revolution runs counter to the very substance of Marxist theory. Internal processes, the ripening of internal contradictions, intensification of a revolutionary situation, of a revolutionary crisis—that is what is needed to make a socialist revolution possible in any country.

The theorists who advocate various methods of violence put their stake on the violent resolution of the external contradictions between the two world systems. In so doing, they completely ignore the inter-

nal contradictions in each capitalist country, the specific features of development in each country, and the formation of the objective and subjective conditions necessary for a revolution.

In his book *Anti-Duhring* Engels sharply criticized Duhring's theory of violence. Completely failing to understand the role of economic factors of development, Duhring named violence as the decisive factor. He believed that classes arose because one group of people forcibly subjugated another group, and that violence was thus the factor that brought about the division of society into classes. According to that theory **the destruction of a class society can be achieved by violence, regardless of the economic conditions.**

Revolutionary violence is indeed a great and essential element in social development. However, violence cannot be considered by itself alone. If taken outside of its connection with the objective economic and other conditions, violence becomes **"playing at revolution,"** a reckless gamble. Marx had the appropriate conditions in view when he called violence "the midwife" in the development of society if society was "pregnant with revolution." If the objective conditions are not ripe, however, **no amount of violence by itself can resolve the contradictions. That is an ABC of Marxism.**

Of course, **world capitalism has long been ripe, overripe, one might say, from the viewpoint of the economic conditions for the socialist transformation of society.** This does not mean, however, that it is possible to ignore the concrete process of the ripening of the objective and subjective conditions for a socialist revolution in an individual country, and therefore force a socialist revolution on it from outside.

The following question may arise. Was not the Soviet Army's victory in the Second World War the factor that contributed to the development of the socialist revolution in a number of countries of Eastern Europe? It was undoubtedly one of the major factors in the socialist revolution, helping to resolve the internal contradictions in those countries. **But it would be incorrect to believe that it was the only factor.** If not for the intensification of deep-rooted internal contradictions the socialist revolution could not have won in those countries.

The victory of the Soviet Union's Armed Forces provided a powerful **impetus** and contributed to the development and resolution of the internal contradictions. Nevertheless, the internal contradictions in Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and the other countries, the uniting of all the progressive forces against fascism, and the guiding role of the working class and its party were, of course, the decisive factors in the victory of the socialist revolution in those countries. **No matter how great was the part played by the external conditions, those conditions were a secondary factor** compared with the decisive internal processes taking place in those countries.

The basic line of development of the world socialist revolution thus undoubtedly follows the objective laws of dialectics in our era as well. Today, too, **the fundamental contradictions** from the viewpoint of each country **are the internal ones,** while the external contradictions, caused by the existence of the two world systems, are a force that assists, facilitates and stimulates the development of the internal contradictions, a force that contributes to their resolution. It is significant that Lenin repeatedly emphasized—and this is a decisive point for an understanding of the dialectics of contemporary development—that beginning with the moment the first socialist country arose, socialism would exert its main influence on the process of world development by its economic policy and its economic achievements.

Looking at the economic progress in the socialist countries, at the rising living standards there, the workers and farmers of the capitalist countries see for themselves that only socialism can satisfy the fundamental requirements of the working people.

This means that socialism is proving its superiority by its economic development first and foremost. Socialism has registered unprecedented creative achievements in the spheres of production, science and technology and in establishing a new, free community of people that is satisfying their material and spiritual requirements to an increasing degree.

The bigger are the economic achievements of the socialist countries, the greater is the attraction of the ideas of socialism and communism.

The specific feature of contemporary development, however, is not only that the existence of the world socialist system facilitates the transition of other countries to socialism but also that it exercises a definite influence on the forms of the transition. **The working class and its vanguard, the Marxist-Leninist Parties, prefer to carry out the transfer of power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat by peaceful means,** without civil war.

This would meet the interests of the working class and the people as a whole, it would accord with the national interests of the country. It is clear, of course, that peaceful transition is not the only road, that when the exploiting classes resort to violence against the people, the possibility of a **non-peaceful transition to socialism** should be borne in mind.

The conclusion that there are many different forms of transition from capitalism to socialism and that peaceful methods of transition are possible is not the fruit of subjective wishes but follows from a genuine Marxist analysis and generalization of the conditions of development today, from a searching appraisal of the contemporary historical situation, as called for by the dialectical method of study.

In arguing that the transition from capitalism to socialism was possible only through a socialist revolution, Marxism never obliged Communists to adhere only to revolutionary methods of overthrowing the bourgeoisie. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels, proceeding from the general nature of the antagonistic contradictions in capitalist society, formulated their famous proposition that the Communists do not hide their views and intentions and openly declare that "their aims can be achieved only by the forcible overthrow of the whole existing social system." But Marx and Engels never held that this general formula expressing the main line of development from capitalism to socialism **freed Communists from the need to take the most thorough account, in the transition to socialism, of the concrete historical situation**

in each country and in the world as a whole, from the need to take into account the traditions and specific history of each country. Marxism has always taken into account the full complexity of the historical process, the many-sided dialectics of the general and the particular.

Addressing a meeting in Amsterdam after the Hague Congress of the First International, Marx emphasized that it was impossible to build a socialist society unless the working class won political power. He then said: "But we have never claimed that similar means are certain to lead to that goal." In particular, he pointed out that in countries like England and America of that time the transfer of power to the working class by peaceful means was possible. Engels considered the condition for a peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism to be a concrete historical situation in a country where "popular representation concentrates all power in its hands, where anything desired can be done by constitutional means if you have the majority of the people behind you." (F. Engels, *A Criticism of the Draft Programme of the Social-Democratic Party,* 1891. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Coll. Works,* Vol. 22, p. 236, Russ. Ed.)

Nor did Lenin exclude such a possibility. After the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 he put forward the slogan of peaceful development of the revolution and transfer of power to the working class. Lenin spoke of this possibility of "peaceful development of the revolution" as being "extremely rare in history and extremely valuable." (V. I. Lenin, *Works,* Vol. 25, pp. 283-284, 4th Russ. Ed.)

Before, that possibility was "extremely rare," but today the situation is different. Taking into account the new situation created by the rise of the world socialist system, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union stated the important proposition that the forms of transition from capitalism to socialism will be more and more diverse in future. The world socialist system is playing the decisive role in the development of mankind, declared the 1960 Meeting of Representatives of 81 Parties, defining the nature of our epoch. **Under present-day conditions the working class in a number of capitalist countries has the possibility of winning state power without a civil war;**

it has the possibility of creating the conditions necessary to accomplish socialist revolution by peaceful means.

The question of various forms of transition from capitalism to socialism is of great practical importance. The Marxist-Leninist proposition that the ruling classes do not give up their power and their privileges voluntarily retains its validity under the new conditions. **The transition to socialism cannot be accomplished without a class struggle by the proletariat and all other working people against the exploiting classes.** But the degree and acuteness of the struggle, and also the question of whether armed violence is to be used against the exploiting classes during the transition to socialism, depend on the concrete situation, on the degree to which the ruling classes resist the transition, which does not necessarily have to be connected with civil war.

The existence of the world socialist system creates favourable conditions, which were not present before, for the transition to socialism; it is becoming fully possible for the progressive forces in one country or another to win, under the guidance of the working class and its party, a majority in parliament and to turn it into an instrument of the people's will. Political leadership of society by the working class must be assured, for otherwise, naturally, the transition to socialism is impossible. By utilizing parliament as an instrument of its will, the working class and, under its guidance, all the working people can turn the main means of production into socially owned property.

Naturally, the forms of transition will be different in capitalist countries where the military-bureaucratic apparatus and the bourgeoisie are strong. There, revolutionary violence will be used to oppose counter-revolutionary violence.

It is important to emphasize that any form of transition to socialism, including a peaceful form, is a revolutionary leap, a fundamental change in the former qualitative state. This means that peaceful development of the socialist revolution does not have anything in common with the reformist idea of the growing over of capitalism into socialism; according to that idea, the elements of socialism can arise

and gradually accumulate while political power remains in the hands of the bourgeoisie and private property of the basic means of production continues, that is, in the framework of the capitalist system.

Some theorists maintain that the recognition of peaceful forms of transition to socialism is a "departure" from the Marxist teaching and is incompatible with it. Apropos of this, we remind the reader that back in 1921 Lenin expressed an opinion which refutes that view. "Marx," he said, "did not tie either his own hands or those of future leaders of the socialist revolution with regard to the forms, methods and means of the revolution, realizing perfectly well what a mass a new problems would then arise, how the entire situation would change in the course of the revolution, how frequently and how much it would change in the course of the revolution." (*Works*, Vol. 32, p. 316, 4th Russ. Ed.)

Those words have a prophetic ring today, when the entire situation has indeed changed, and new problems which could not have existed before have arisen. The proposition that in present-day conditions peaceful forms of the transition of power to the working class are possible, alongside non-peaceful forms, is not a "departure" from Marxism but a dialectical, strictly scientific solution of the new problems that face Marxists today.

As for the practical conclusions to be drawn from the new theoretical propositions, the whole of contemporary history, the working class and revolutionary movement is living confirmation of the correctness of the Marxist-Leninist ideas, for they are in accord with the vital interests of the broad masses of the people.